Viewing Options

Functional Nutrition (https://www.nwhealth.edu/blog/category/nutrition/)

How to Become a Functional Nutritionist

Author: Nicki Adams | **Last updated**: September 11, 2025

If you're curious how food affects health but don't believe in a "one size fits all" approach to nutrition, you could consider becoming a functional nutritionist.

Today millions of people are **suffering from chronic diseases (https://www.cdc.gov/chronic-disease/about/index.html)** such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease and are reporting **higher levels of stress and anxiety (https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/news-releases/americans-anticipate-higher-stress-at-the-start-of)**. Life-style factors like poor nutrition, lack of sleep, and inactivity can exacerbate these issues. Because health is complex and multifaceted, functional nutrition is becoming increasingly important in managing these conditions.

Functional nutritionists are interested in the intricate connections between diet, lifestyle, and well-being. These healthcare professionals view food as medicine and understand that a multidisciplinary approach to nutrition helps people achieve long-lasting vitality.

What Is the Difference Between a Nutritionist and a Functional Nutritionist?

A conventional nutritionist tends to work within a traditional, standardized framework. A functional nutritionist, on the other hand, takes a more progressive and holistic approach.

Functional nutritionists will gather information about their clients' lifestyle, biochemistry, and environment in addition to their diet. This whole-person approach allows the functional nutritionist to provide individuals with a treatment plan crafted specifically to their body and health needs. Because everybody is different, a curated intervention can help a person quickly reach and maintain their health goals.

Hi, I'm Willow, your virtual assistant.

I can help answer your Admissions questions!

How can I help you?

What Are the Education Requirements to Become a Functional Nutritionist?

Many people interested in functional nutrition enter other healthcare professions first. Functional nutrition programs require a bachelor's degree to apply, usually in a related field like nutrition or health sciences. You will receive valuable hands-on experience in your undergraduate studies, usually through internships and higher-level courses.

Once you obtain a bachelor's degree, you will either work towards certification or licensure in your area of study, a graduate degree, or both. If you decide to go to graduate school, you can immediately dive into a **functional nutrition program (https://www.nwhealth.edu/blog/what-to-look-for-in-a-graduate-program-in-nutrition/)** or you can study a different subject before turning to functional nutrition. (Note that many nutrition related certifications will soon require you to have a graduate degree to sit for exams.)

(https://www.nwhealth.edu/academics/nutrition/)

Hi, I'm Willdy, your virtual assistant.

I can help answer your Admissions questions!

How can I help you?

Choosing a Functional Nutrition Program

Some health professionals' study functional nutrition to enhance their practice while others turn it into a career. To help you choose a program, it is best to understand your professional goals. Academic institutions like **Northwestern Health Sciences University (https://www.nwhealth.edu/academics/nutrition/)** (NWHSU) offer graduate degrees with business **courses (https://www.nwhealth.edu/online/functional-integrative-nutrition-curriculum/)**, while professional organizations like **IFM (https://www.ifm.org/)** provide continuing education classes and certificate programs. Organizations like IFM can help you deepen your current knowledge, while academic programs can help you turn functional nutrition into a full-time career.

If you plan to obtain a graduate degree in functional nutrition, you may not need any certifications or even a bachelor's in a related field. For example, NWHSU considers all undergraduate backgrounds for its **Masters of Health Sciences in Functional and Integrative Nutrition (https://www.nwhealth.edu/online/functional-and-integrative-nutrition-admissions-requirements/)**. Each program is different, so it is important to check eligibility requirements. Other factors, like where you plan to practice and the credentials you may already have, will also inform your decision.

Professionals with the following backgrounds often qualify for functional nutrition programs:

Hi, I'm Willow, your virtual assistant.

I can help answer your Admissions questions!

How can I help you?

- Registered Dietitians
- Nutritionists
- **Chiropractors (https://www.nwhealth.edu/academics/chiropractic/)**
- **Health Coaches (https://www.nwhealth.edu/academics/graduate-certificate-integrative-health/)**
- Physicians
- Physician Assistants
- Naturopaths
- Nurses

How Long Does It Take to Become a Functional Nutritionist?

Depending on your level of education and training, you can complete most programs within a couple months to a year. Some, like NWHSU's online program, are flexible and can be done part time.

What Happens After I Complete My Functional Nutrition Program?

Many programs will prepare you for nutrition or health-coaching certification exams. Some will only provide you with a certificate of completion.

It is important to know what your career g at best fits you. Receiving a certificate is not ds credibility to your title and ensures clients you are working under the established standards of the profession.

Hi, I'm Willow, your virtual assistant.
I can help answer your Admissions questions!
How can I help you?

NWHSU's program is approved by the National Board of Health and Wellness Coaches (**NBHWC (https://nbhwc.org/what-is-a-health-coach/)**). It includes an embedded option for students to become a certified health coach. It also satisfies the coursework for the popular Certified Nutrition Specialist (**CNS (https://www.theana.org/certify)**) certification and the Certified Clinical Nutritionist (**CCN (https://cncb.org/steps-to-credentialing/)**) credential.

Note that some states require national certification and/or state licensure to practice.

What Jobs Can I Get After I Become a Functional Nutritionist?

Depending upon your credentials and each state's specific practice requirements, you could:

- **Start a private practice (https://www.nwhealth.edu/blog/add-functional-nutrition-to-your-chiropractic-practice/)**
- Enter into clinical practice in hospitals and other clinical settings
- Work at spas, retreats, or fitness centers
- Build a career in the natural products, dietary supplement, or culinary industry
- Move into higher education teaching positions
- Focus on public health and policy doing research or community education

Becoming a functional nutritionist is a rewarding journey that empowers you to make a profound impact on individuals' lives. By approaching health with a holistic perspective and a deep understanding of the body's in towards a better quality of life.

Hi, I'm Willow, your virtual assistant.

I can help answer your Admissions questions!

How can I help you?

Your Next Step: Reach Out for More Information

Whether you want to build a career specifically in functional nutrition or enhance your current healthcare practice with nutritional knowledge, NWHSU's F**unctional and Integrative Nutrition program (https://www.nwhealth.edu/academics/nutrition/)** will prepare you for success.

Start your exploration of the functional nutrition program today! **Reach out to NWHSU (https://www.nwhealth.edu/admissions/request-information/)** for personalized support on your path.

(https://www.nwhealth.edu/)

2501 W. 84th St.
Bloomington, MN 55431

952-888-4777 (tel:9528884777)

Hi, I'm Willow, your virtual assistant.

I can help answer your Admissions questions!

Contact Us

How can I help you?

About Us

Who We Are & Mission (https://www.nwhealth.edu/about-us/)

University History (https://www.nwhealth.edu/about-us/university-history/)

Board of Trustees (https://www.nwhealth.edu/board/)

Directory (https://www.nwhealth.edu/faculty/)

Jobs at NWHSU (https://nwhealth.applicantpro.com/pages/careershome/)

Departments

Office of Student Affairs (https://www.nwhealth.edu/student-affairs/)

Office of the Registrar (https://www.nwhealth.edu/registrar/)

Office of IT (https://www.nwhealth.edu/information-technology/)

Financial Aid Services (https://www.nwhealth.edu/registrar/financial-aid-services/)

Admissions (https://www.nwhealth.edu/admissions/)

Academics (https://www.nwhealth.edu/academics/)

Continuing Education (https://www.nwhealth.edu/continuing-education/)

Clinics (https://www.nwhealth.edu/clinics/)

Health Policy & Research (https://www.nwhealth.edu/research/)

Alumni (https://www.nwhealth.edu/alumni-career-services/)

Quick Links

Title IX (https://www.nwhealth.edu/title-ix/)

Notice of Non-Discrimination (http
discri

Campus Map (https://www.nwhealth.edu/current-students/campus-information/parking-and-maps/)

Campus Events Calendar (https://www.nwhealth.edu/events/)

Hi, I'm Willow, your virtual assistant.

I can help answer your Admissions questions!

How can I help you?

TruNorth Wellness Hub (Campus Bookstore)

(https://www.nwhealth.edu/trunorthwellnesshub/)

Commencement/Graduation (https://www.nwhealth.edu/student-affairs/graduation/)

Event Rental and Reservation Requests (https://www.nwhealth.edu/event-planning-and-rental-request-form/)

Greenawalt Library (https://www.nwhealth.edu/library/)

IT Help Desk (https://www.nwhealth.edu/information-technology/it-help/help-desk/)

Request Information (https://www.nwhealth.edu/admissions/request-information/)

University Catalog (https://nwhealth.smartcatalogiq.com/en)

NWHSU Community Health (https://www.nwhealth.edu/community-health/)

(https://www.tiktok.com/@nwhsu)

(https://www.instagram.com/nwhealthu

(https://www.facebook.com/nwhsu)

(https://www.linkedin.com/school/northwestern-he university)

(https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqwL9saBLxrM

Hi, I'm Willow, your virtual assistant.

I can help answer your Admissions questions!

How can I help you?

© 2026 Northwestern

Privacy Policy (https://www.nwhealth.edu/contact-us/privacy-policy/)

Sitemap (https://www.nwhealth.edu/sitemap/)